UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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RESULTS OF WINTER MISSISSIPPI FLYWAY SURVEY REPORTED BY THE INTERIOR DEPARTMENT

Although more ducks and geese were observed in the Mississippi Flyway

States in January 1963, during the annual winter waterfowl survey than during
a comparable survey in 1962, the numbers seen, with the exception of geese, were
still below the average for the past ten years, the Department of the Interior
reported today.

Observations of mallards, the Flyway's most popular duck, indicated a 37 percent increase over last winter's survey. However, they still are 27 percent below the ten-year average. Considerably more pintails also were observed this year, but the numbers of other kinds of dabbling ducks were either unchanged or lower.

Diving ducks were observed during the survey in about the same numbers as a year ago. Scaup or bluebill were second to mallards in numbers among all ducks tallied. The popular canvasback continued comparatively scarce.

Mississippi Flyway goose totals apparently reached a new high due to the large number of Canada geese observed. Blue and snow geese numbers were about average.

Not as many coots were counted compared with a year ago, but they still were near the ten-year average due primarily to the unusually favorable habitat conditions of recent years in the Louisiana marshes.

Among the fourteen States included in the Mississippi Flyway, three held most of the ducks. Louisiana had 61 percent, Arkansas 16 percent, and Illinois 10 percent. Eighty-five percent were found in the six southern States of the flyway.

In surveying the Mississippi Flyway, 740 people covered 61,000 miles in 53 airplanes, 580 automobiles, and 25 boats. The 1963 Mississippi Flyway winter survey started January 7 and was completed January 15.

In reporting on the Mississippi Flyway count, the Department explained that the Midwinter Survey seeks information about winter habitat conditions and long-term waterfowl population trends. Because observers rely completely on a visual tally, it is not possible to make an actual count of all the waterfowl in the Flyway. Over several years, however, the survey does provide a general picture of population trends and for a very few species it also is a reliable head-count, the Department said.

The Midwinter information does not have a direct cause-and-effect relationship to the annual waterfowl hunting regulations, but the study is one of several sources of information used in setting hunting limits each year.

The extensive survey covers wintering areas of Mexico and Canada as well as all the States. It is coordinated by the Fish and Wildlife Service's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. The entire job must be completed as soon as possible to guard against duplicate counts of birds that may move from one area to another.

On the first day of the survey, hundreds of waterfowl observers in the United States, Canada and Mexico climb into cars, boats and airplanes to see how many waterfowl of each species can be observed in the assigned areas. Men and equipment from the Fish and Wildlife Service, State game and fish departments, the United States Armed Forces, the Canadian Wildlife Service, fish and game departments of the Canadian Provinces, and private organizations cooperate in carrying out the important study.

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